

Exhibit 18

ArchiveSiblings get \$2.5M from lawsuit

Children exposed to lead in Albany apartments suffering side effects

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ALBANY - Three teenagers who were poisoned by lead paint as children will share a \$2.5 million trust fund from their mother's former landlords under a case that attorneys said Tuesday was the largest settlement in upstate for a single family.

The siblings were exposed to lead during the 1990s from peeling paint in several run-down Albany apartments owned by two different landlords, said Peter Danziger, who represents their mother, Maria Vasquez. Danziger said the \$2.5 million settlement will be shared by Jasmine, 17; Tina, 15, and Juan, 14, who suffered elevated lead levels while living in apartments on Clinton, Lexington and Second avenues and Third Street.

The payments will come from insurance policies by the landlords, Sunanda and Ajay Sanghi, and brothers Amarjit and Rajinder Narang, all of Albany, he said. The money will be held in a lifetime trust for the children. Terms of when and how the money will be disbursed were not immediately available Tuesday.

"I hope they can someday get a normal job and do what other kids do," said Vasquez, a mother of five, during a press conference in Danziger's downtown Albany law office. "I tell them to do what they have to do and don't pay attention to anything else. They are as smart as anyone else."

However, it was alleged that lead exposure - believed to be from peeling lead paint in the apartments - caused learning disabilities in her three children. Lead, which was banned from household paint in 1978, is known to cause developmental problems in children.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, lead may cause a range of health effects, from behavioral problems and learning disabilities to seizures and death. Children 6 and under are most at risk, because they are growing quickly.

Juan, a ninth-grader in Albany city schools, is hyperactive and still cannot read. "We have to read his work to him," his mother said. Tina, also a ninth-grader, reads at a fourth-grade level.

Jasmine didn't finish high school. As a toddler, her blood level tested six times higher than considered dangerous and she was hospitalized four times for lead removal therapy.

None of the siblings attended the press conference.

The landlords no longer own rental properties in Albany, Danziger said. He said the Vasquez case points out a shortcoming in state law, which requires landlords and county Health Departments to clean toxic apartments only after tests show a child has been poisoned. Last year, a proposed change in state law that would have triggered apartment inspections at a lower blood level of lead poisoning passed the state Assembly but not the Senate.

Brian Casey, an attorney for the Sanghis, and Paul Campito, attorney for the Narangs, could not be reached for comment.

Danziger said county health departments now do a much better job of ensuring tainted apartments are cleaned properly.

For the last decade, Albany has been cleaning lead-tainted homes under a program funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. So far, the program has provided \$27.5 million.

The city has cleaned more than 1,700 homes in the neighborhoods of Arbor Hill, West Hill, North Albany and the South End. The state Department of Health estimated that from 1994 to 2002 more than 2,200

children in Arbor Hill, West Hill and the South End had unsafe levels of lead in their blood.

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